

Scoping and Public Involvement Document

*Northeast Novelty Hill Road Project
January - March 2001*

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Summary

From January to March 2001, the King County Road Services Division solicited public comments about the scope of the environmental impact statement for the proposed Northeast Novelty Hill Road widening project. Northeast Novelty Hill Road is a two-lane arterial between Redmond and Duvall in far northeast King County. Growth in Redmond and Duvall, as well as developments along Northeast Novelty Hill Road itself, has contributed to increased traffic levels on the roadway.

This scoping document and public involvement report describe key components of the King County Road Services Division's public outreach, which included a direct mailing to residents, an interactive Web site, news releases and a public meeting. The report also summarizes feedback from the public.

Here are the key findings of the public outreach effort:

- The largest number of comments questioned the scope of the project, with concerns voiced about "bottlenecks" at both ends of the designated project area.
- Members of the community expressed concerns about impacts to rural lifestyles, to the natural environment and to quality of life in the area.
- Members of the community contributed many suggestions for roadway amenities.
- Community members expressed displeasure about the location of urban planned developments along the roadway, saying that the developers of the UPDs should be paying more for improvements to the road.

At a later date, an addendum to this document will summarize the comments received at the Northeast Novelty Hill Road Resource Agency Meeting, scheduled to take place in April 2001.

Outreach Activities

On January 10, 2001, the King County Road Services Division, with assistance of King County DOT Community Relations, mailed 7,800 copies of a four-page Novelty Hill Road scoping notification to households and property owners in contiguous areas within Redmond and Duvall and along Northeast Novelty Hill Road. An invitation to a public open house on January 23 was included in the document. The document also provided a history and rationale for the project, a project time line and information about how to provide public comments to King County staff. The deadline for comments was March 1, 2001.

Besides the direct mailing, copies of the scoping document were sent to every affected public agency. Copies were also made available at local libraries and city halls.

News releases and signboards posted along the roadway itself provided additional information to the public. Community Relations established an interactive Web site for this project.

On January 23, 85 people attended the public open house held at Emily Dickinson Elementary School, which is at the corner of Northeast Union Hill Road and 208th Avenue Northeast. At the meeting, community members gave comments by speaking to a court reporter; writing comments on post-it notes for placement on a large plot-line map; filling out comment sheets; or speaking to any of the many staff available. Staff provided attendees with additional comment sheets for distribution to neighbors who could not attend.

Feedback

By March 1, 2001, King County DOT Community Relations had received 139 comments from individuals and agencies. These comments were received in the following manner: mailed letters and comment sheets (27); e-mail messages (30); phone calls (7); post-it-notes on the plot-line map at the open house (56); written comments submitted at the open house (11); and testimony given to the court reporter at the open house (16). Please note that many of these comments covered more than one topic and that several comments were submitted twice (by e-mail and by letter, for example) but only counted once in the total. All comments are in the appendixes of this report.

The comments can be broadly divided into the following categories. The first category – Concerns about the scope of the project – got the most comments. The other categories were about evenly divided:

Concerns about the scope of the project

The single item receiving the most comments concerned “bottlenecking” at both ends of the project area. Participants questioned the wisdom of widening Northeast Novelty Hill Road if traffic emptied onto an already crowded Avondale Road Northeast on the western side or bottlenecked onto a twisting hillside road that leads to West Snoqualmie Valley Road Northeast on the eastern side. Participants asked King County to work with the state Department of Transportation and City of Redmond to provide a “systemwide” approach to improving the corridor. Many suggested that the project scope be revised to include treatments to both ends of the road.

Concerns about impacts to the community

A number of comments related to impacts on the community living along Northeast Novelty Hill Road. These comments including the following: frustrations of ongoing construction; impacts on rural lifestyles; concerns about increased traffic along the road; concerns about decreased safety along the road; impacts to individual property owners and to the general quality of property along the road; and impacts on equestrian needs.

Concerns about impacts to the environment

Participants expressed a number of concerns about the impact of this project on the natural environment. These concerns included comments about wetland protection; stormwater and groundwater runoff; noise pollution; air pollution; wildlife and habitat; trees and natural growth; and salmon spawning streams.

Suggestions for roadway amenities

Participants provided a wide range of suggestions for roadway amenities to improve safety and quality of life along the roadway if the project goes forward. These suggestions included the following: sound barriers or walls; bicycle lanes; light signals at the intersections of Northeast Novelty Hill Road and 102nd Avenue Northeast, 206th Avenue Northeast and 214th Avenue Northeast; lighting; equestrian crossings; roundabouts; landscaped medians; a Metro park-and-ride lot; bus lanes; and school bus turnouts. A number of these comments referred to the Bear and Evans Creek Trail, with suggestions that King County work with the City of Redmond to provide this trail with a tunneled crossing for pedestrians, horses and bikes.

General concern about the project

A number of participants had general concerns about this project. By far the largest number of these comments expressed displeasure at King County for entering into agreements with private developers to build urban planned developments along Northeast Novelty Hill Road. While some of these respondents expressed support for the project and others expressed opposition, all agreed that the UPD developers should pay for a greater proportion of the road widening. Other comments included remarks against higher taxes; suggestions that King County renegotiate its contracts with the developers; comments on the negative impacts on the Growth Management Act; concerns about county employees trespassing on private property; the proper name of Northeast Novelty Hill Road; and the communications process for this project.

Scope of the Environmental Impact Statement

As a result of this public outreach and scoping process, the King County Road Services Division will include the following items in the scope of the environmental impact statement:

1. extend limits of the study to West Snoqualmie Valley Road Northeast on the east
2. investigate a pedestrian, bike and equestrian tunnel for Bear and Evans Creek crossing.

Appendices

- Outreach Documents, including a copy of the scoping notice, news releases and Web site
- Letters
- E-mail Messages
- Phone Log
- Comment Sheets
- Post-It-Note Comments
- Testimony to Court Reporter